

**GB-17 Testimony An Act to Promote Fairness in Access to Information, Support, and Justice for Victims of Sexual Assault
Public Safety and Security Committee
February 27, 2018**

Honorable Chairmen and Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee, my name is Win Evarts and I'm the Executive Director of the Arc of Connecticut and the Board President of Disability Rights Connecticut.

I'm here today to support the changes to the statute as proposed by the Governor's bill and also to request that the Commission on the Standardization of the Collection of Evidence in Sexual Assault Investigations be expanded to include a representative from a disability rights group.

The Commission, as presently envisioned, is comprised of representatives concerned with the protection of children and the elders, but not one concerned with protecting people with disabilities; even though the standards and protocols developed by the Commission acknowledge the need handle cases of sexual assault involving individuals with intellectual disabilities with special procedures.

According to U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics data from 2009-2015, the rate of violent victimization (defined as rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault and simple assault) was 2.5 times higher for people with disabilities than for their non-disabled peers. In a multi-part series in January 2018, National Public Radio disclosed a previously unpublished and stunning statistic that individuals with I/DD are seven times more likely to be a victim of sexual abuse than their non-disabled peers. With this stark difference in propensity to be victimized, expanding the Commission's members to include a representative of a disability rights organization is important and needed.

Our suggested representative would be the Director of Connecticut's protection and advocacy system for persons with disability (Disability Rights Connecticut) as designated by the Governor in 2017, or their designee. The representation of individuals with disabilities, including I/DD, directly aligns with Disability Rights Connecticut's mandate to use legally based advocacy, monitoring, and the investigation of abuse and neglect to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your service to all of Connecticut's citizens.

Respectfully submitted,

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